

COUNTRY: Belgium

SECURITY INFORMATION

C 28471

SUBJECT: Discontent Among Masses/Evasion of Law/Attitude Toward N.A.T.O.,
Benelux, Rearmament/Trade with Soviets

25X1X6

PLACE ACQUIRED: [REDACTED]

25X1A2g

DATE ACQUIRED : [REDACTED]

DATE OF INFO : [REDACTED]

25X1X6

SOURCE: [REDACTED]

1. The mass of Belgian people are unhappy over current political and economic developments. They feel they have been let down by all the parties and campaign promises forgotten. They are convinced that politicians are not interested in the welfare of the country and seek office only for the privileges they can gain. Consequently, they feel they are being exploited.
2. Being individualists and selfish, they seek to gain some satisfaction by avoiding compliance with laws and will expend effort in evading a law to which they voice no objection. If directed to do something, they endeavor to find another way of accomplishing the same end. If directed not to do something, they seek means of doing it covertly.
3. The old practice of tax evasion has been intensified. Sales of items of considerable value are generally invoiced at a reduced figure and the balance, paid in cash, hoarded in the individual's safe. Thus a car which sells for 100,000 francs will be invoiced at 70,000 francs and the balance held in cash. Tax advisors are generally ex-government tax department employees who seem to accept their purpose as aiding in tax evasion.
4. Government and military people like N.A.T.O. as a security measure and the fact it gives them advantage of U.S. arms development. The masses feel that despite all preparations the Soviets will over-run the country whenever they decide to and the U.S. will then free them. They like U.S. help, but resent any pressure to influence their course of action.
5. Rearmament is unpopular and army service avoided if possible.
6. The Benelux union is unpopular as they feel they make all the sacrifices and the Netherlands gets all the advantages. They dislike to admit they do not like to compete with the harder working, more poorly paid Dutch labor.
7. There is no important volume of Soviet goods sold in Belgium, although I do not believe there would be any reluctance in handling any trade that promised a profit. The only Soviet goods [REDACTED] are Moskvich cars which are used only because of the lower price. The small car sells for fr. 53,900 as compared with fr. 58,900 for a Volkswagen; fr. 76,500 for an Opel; and fr. 129,500 for a Chevrolet.

25X1X6

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8. The quality is very poor. Door handles can be twisted off and the hood must be raised gently lest it be bent. The paint looks like it has been applied with a brush and mechanical parts are roughly finished.

- 25X1X6 9. [REDACTED] no inquiries for tires that specify certain areas as the destination.
25X1X6 [REDACTED] frequent inquiries for truck tires, usually all of one size,
25X1X6 825-20, in lots of 5,000 to 10,000 for delivery some where within the
25X1X6 country of origin of the inquiry. [REDACTED] information as to the
[REDACTED]

- 25X1X6 10. In late August, [REDACTED] received an order for
25X1X6 coat lining cloth amounting to two million francs for shipment to the
25X1X6 U.S.S.R. The order had been passed to him by the Belgian Government. 25X1X6
11. Animosity toward Germans has been forgotten. German salesmen are every-
where and their wares, especially radio and television sets, are popular.

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